

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION TESTIMONY
Youth Crime and Violence Prevention
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A. Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity to speak at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on youth crime and violence prevention. I am the President and CEO of The California Wellness Foundation, an independent, private foundation, created in 1992, whose mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education, and disease prevention.

Immediately prior to joining the Foundation, I was the Associate Director of the Division of Adolescent Medicine at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. I have worked with children, youth and families in the areas of education and health care for more than twenty years and have published numerous articles and curricula on adolescent health and prevention programs. I am also a licensed Marriage, Family and Child Therapist and I serve in the capacity of Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Southern California School of Medicine. I have also served on numerous commissions, boards and task forces that have looked into the issues surrounding the prevention of high-risk behavior.

Six years ago, I testified before the Little Hoover Commission about the California juvenile justice system at a time when there were fewer youth in the state, less money in the state budget, and more punitive, reactive measures being passed by the state legislature. Today, California has an estimated 3.9 million teens and will have 5 million by 2010. There's an unprecedented budget surplus with a strong economy, low unemployment and record-setting declines in juvenile crime and violence. And members of both the state assembly and senate have introduced bills to advance a prevention agenda that has broad public support.

Given this new climate in California, I'm here to speak to the issues of foundation funding and the roles of foundations and the state in promoting violence prevention. In particular, I've been asked to address two questions:

- 1) *What violence prevention programs have been funded by the Foundation?*
- 2) *What are the appropriate roles for foundations and state government in advancing a statewide prevention agenda?*

B. Funding

1. Youth crime and violence prevention programs funded by the Foundation that have as their purpose, potential or result the reduction of youth crime or violence

The first grantmaking initiative of the Foundation was launched in October 1992 as a \$60 million, ten-year commitment to prevent violence against youth in California, because violence, as the leading cause of death for California's youth is a major public health issue. Now in its eighth year, the Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative is the largest commitment of private philanthropic dollars to violence prevention in the United States. The total allocation for the Initiative increased to approximately \$70 million because of collaborative funding provided by the following grantmakers: the Alliance Healthcare Foundation, The California Endowment, the S.H. Cowell Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Crail Johnson Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, and the Sierra Health Foundation.

From the beginning, The California Wellness Foundation recognized that tackling the public health epidemic of violence against youth would require a long-term investment that involved more than just one foundation and supported more than one solution. An underlying philosophy of the Foundation's grantmaking is that local communities often know the best approaches to dealing with local problems of violence. What is often lacking are the resources and technical assistance necessary to put this community strength and wisdom to work effectively.

The Foundation recognizes that violence is a public health issue, and that preventing violence is not just a public safety matter but a public health mandate. Violence results in premature death, serious injury and disability, especially among our youth. The Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative is grounded in a public health approach, which takes into account not only the individual but also the physical and social environments that foster or inhibit violence and the agents of violence, such as guns.

California foundations currently allocate at least \$16 million* each year in grant support to programs that prevent violence against youth. *(annual estimate includes: \$7 million from TCWF; \$1 million from TCE; \$7 million from Packard; \$1 million from other co-funders)

2. The intended goals for each program, funding amounts and time limits on funding

There is no single cause of violence, so there is no single solution to stop violence. That's why the Foundation has supported a wide range of prevention programs and strategies. The Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative has four interrelated programs: 1) Research; 2) Policy and Public Education; 3) Leadership; and 4) Community Action.

The Research Program contributes to informing grantees and policymakers about the causes, risk and protective factors for violence. Research has also explored the role of access to alcohol and guns with regard to violence against youth. Since 1993, the Foundation has made 15 research grants totaling \$3.3 million.

The Policy and Public Education Program educates policymakers, opinion leaders and the public about the need to increase public and private investment in comprehensive violence prevention programs for youth, and efforts to reduce injuries and deaths from firearms. The policy program works to shift public attitudes and redefine violence against youth not only as a criminal justice issue but also as a public health issue. The Pacific Center for Violence Prevention, funded by the Foundation, is a statewide resource center for information and advocacy related to violence and can be found at www.pcvp.org. Foundation-funded public education campaigns have used advertising, media relations and direct mail to publicize facts and polling data that inform policymakers and opinion leaders about effective policies for preventing violence against youth. Campaign information is available at www.preventviolence.org. A total of \$21 million is allocated to the Policy and Public Education Program.

The Leadership and Professional Development Program recognizes and promotes individual leadership in communities and within the field of violence prevention as a whole. The goals of the program are to help communities empower themselves by recognizing leadership in violence prevention and to support the professional training of ethnic minorities and women in violence prevention and injury control. Grants are made to individuals in three ways: the California Peace Prize, the Academic Fellows Program, and the Community Fellows Program. Since 1992, more than 100 individuals have been awarded Foundation grants through these programs, strengthening a core group of leaders for violence prevention throughout the state. A total of \$9 million is allocated to the Leadership and Professional Development Program.

The purpose of the Community Action Program is to mobilize local residents to prevent violence against youth and to help communities build skills in policy and media advocacy. The Foundation has funded 30 community collaboratives across the state in areas where violence has claimed the lives of youth at an alarming rate. Each collaborative is made up of organizations serving diverse populations in areas with major problems such as high rates of violence, population density, school dropouts, poverty and unemployment. Programs have been funded in the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt (two sites), Kern, Los Angeles (seven sites), Mendocino, Riverside (three sites), Sacramento (three sites), San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego (three sites), San Francisco (three sites), San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Siskiyou, and Tulare. With TCWF funding, these programs have engaged in a variety of activities, including after-school programs, conflict resolution training, peer mentoring and other local violence prevention strategies. A total of \$26 million is allocated to the Community Action Program.

Finally, in addition to funding programs, the Initiative also provides technical assistance in order to build the capacity of individuals, institutions, collaboratives, and communities to promote sustainable youth violence prevention efforts in California. A total of \$3.4 million is allocated to technical assistance and capacity-building in the Initiative.

Within the violence prevention priority area at the Foundation, two types of grants are made: initiative grants and general (or responsive) grants. The majority of funds are allocated through initiative grants, which are generally announced through competitive requests for proposals. We also recognize the value of remaining open to the ideas and needs of people directly involved in promoting health and preventing disease. Accordingly, in addition to the above Initiative grants,

a portion of our funds is allocated through general grants. To respond to as many requests as possible, general grants tend to be smaller and of shorter duration, ranging from \$5,000 to \$110,000 over one or two years. A total of \$1 million per year is allocated to general grants for violence prevention.

3. How programs are evaluated for effectiveness, who conducts the evaluation, and the dollar amount allocated for evaluation

From the beginning, the Foundation planned from for the Initiative to be evaluated. To assess the impact of the Initiative from 1993 through 1998, the Foundation awarded \$6 million in evaluation grants to the RAND Corporation and the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention. Evaluation goals included providing ongoing feedback to grantees for program improvement and a comprehensive assessment of the overall effectiveness of the Initiative and its components. The evaluation was designed to provide information to the Foundation to continuously improve the Initiative; document accomplishments; draw lessons learned; and assess the eventual effectiveness of the interventions at the community level as rigorously and objectively as possible.

The evaluators attempted to isolate violence reduction effects of the Initiative grants, however, the evaluation emphasized the Initiative's success at achieving various intermediate effects, which might be expected to help reduce youth violence. These intermediate effects included: changes in the attitudes and skills of youth; adults' opinions and support for violence prevention; opinion leaders' political activism for violence prevention; changes in state-level and local policies and social programs; and changes in the media's portrayal of the problem of youth violence. To determine these effects, RAND and Stanford used a variety of evaluation methods including case studies, in-depth interviews, and quantitative techniques.

The evaluation of the first five years of the Initiative has been completed by RAND and Stanford and the Foundation will disseminate a report on the results in the near future. Among the key findings, the Initiative's research grants were shown to have generated practical, groundbreaking research that has shaped and influenced policymaking on a statewide and national level. RAND also compared California to Michigan and Illinois and found that the Initiative's Policy Program has been exceptionally effective at informing policy makers and opinion leaders about effective violence prevention policies. The evaluators pointed to evidence showing that significant gun control measures and youth violence prevention bills were more numerous and more successful in California due to the policy and public education efforts of the Initiative.

According to RAND, the Initiative's Leadership Program accomplished its goals of training a diverse group of health professionals in violence prevention and supporting a statewide cadre of committed grassroots leaders. Many of the program's alumni have continued to do work in violence prevention and have made important contributions such as new research, innovative programs, and effective policy education.

In the Community Action Program, the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention evaluated the outcomes of the community-based violence prevention programs. Stanford found that although these programs were modestly successful in mobilizing local residents to address

violence on a community-wide scale, the prevention programs did lead to less violence among the youth exposed to the programs, greater community pride and awareness, more youth involvement in positive activities in the school and community, and a marked decline in violent crime rates in most of the funded communities. Five of the communities demonstrated greater drops in violent crime than other comparable communities in the state.

The evaluation of the final five years of the Initiative will build on the findings of the initial evaluation in order to tell us how the Initiative, through its interrelated components, has made a difference after a decade of funding. This evaluation will include in-depth, descriptive case studies of the community action collaboratives, an analysis of the policy efforts and legislative impact of the Initiative, and profiles of the health professionals and grassroots leaders in the Leadership Program.. A total of \$1.3 million will be awarded in grants to evaluate the final five years of the Initiative.

4. How funding decisions are made

Generally, the Foundation makes funding decisions on Initiative grants through a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process and information meetings for prospective applicants. Organizations are also welcome to submit unsolicited letters of interest for general grants and some are chosen to submit proposals. The review process may include an independent review of proposals by external experts in violence prevention and site visits by Foundation staff. Staff makes funding recommendations to the Board of Directors, which has final authority to authorize grants. The process typically takes from nine months to a year.

C. Foundations and the State

1. The appropriate role of foundations in youth crime and violence prevention

Foundations are by no means monolithic or uniform. However, foundations do share a commitment to serving the public good and can therefore play a range of roles that are not only appropriate but can also be instrumental in preventing violence against youth. The following are some examples:

- ◆ *Funder:* In California, foundations make at least \$16 million in grants each year to prevent violence against youth – an estimate that pales in comparison to state government allocations for prevention, which according to a recent report by Commonweal, amount to \$250 million annually. These limited private grants by foundations can often complement (but not match) government dollars by filling the gaps that may not be covered by local, state, or federal funds such as program evaluation, general operating support, technical assistance, research, and advocacy.
- ◆ *Convenor:* Philanthropy represents an independent sector that can help build bridges between nonprofits, communities, and government. Identifying, linking and bringing together “unlikely allies” is what The California Wellness Foundation has done by convening meetings of people who are working to prevent violence but who may not have the forum to share different perspectives and strategies -- from law enforcement, criminal justice, faith-

based and community groups to representatives of health organizations, education, and the media.

- ◆ *Capacity-Builder:* To promote sustainability, money isn't the only resource foundations can offer. The California Wellness Foundation has also provided grants for technical assistance, training, and other support to violence prevention collaboratives around the state to build a wide range of capacities like youth development, strategic planning, fundraising, policy advocacy, and program evaluation.
- ◆ *Catalyst:* From Head Start to mentoring, foundations have a history of funding innovative but untested pilot programs and demonstration projects at the local level that state and federal government have then taken to scale.
- ◆ *Ombudsman:* The Foundation has commissioned independent studies, nonpartisan reports, polling data, and policy updates on violence prevention that the public and policymakers have found to be educational, timely, and credible.
- ◆ *Evaluator:* Through traditional and informal program evaluations, foundations can find out what works, what doesn't, and why, providing valuable information to be shared with private and public funders as well as nonprofits and other community groups.

Within the past decade, foundations have become more effective at leveraging the limited dollars available for grantmaking in violence prevention by pooling philanthropic resources, which include money, information, technical support, and networks. Foundations, like government, are learning to “walk the talk” of collaboration that we often require of communities. Three examples of these funding partnerships and learning communities among foundations are the ten-year Violence Prevention Initiative funded by The California Wellness Foundation and eight other foundations in the state; the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention in Washington, D.C.; and the Foundation Consortium, a collaborative of 16 California foundations that has helped fund technical assistance, training and evaluation for a variety of State programs including Healthy Start, Proposition 10, and the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods legislation.

2. The appropriate role of the state in youth crime and violence prevention

In September 1994, the Little Hoover Commission made at least 18 recommendations on the State's role in addressing an upsurge in youth violence that was then called “the juvenile crime challenge.” Crime and violence rates have dropped dramatically nationwide since this Commission issued its report six years ago entitled, “Making Prevention A Priority.” Today, the State can continue to play a leadership role in prioritizing prevention by helping to frame the issues, coordinate efforts, share information, and increase public funding to support and institutionalize prevention programs.

In particular, the State should consider framing violence as a public health issue and acknowledge that law enforcement and the courts can't do it alone. Preventing violence requires comprehensive approaches that are multi-disciplinary, community-based, and inter-departmental

to address the root causes of violence. In an August 2000 report on crime prevention in California, the Legislative Analyst's Office echoed this Commission's 1994 finding that multiple state departments need to better coordinate their prevention programs to avoid duplication and inefficiency. Given the current budget surplus, the state is in a unique position to build on the grants made by foundations and other funders and strengthen the prevention infrastructure in California by investing more in programs and services that prevent violence.

3. The most effective prevention strategies

Since 1993, The California Wellness Foundation has funded community-based violence prevention programs that have been making a difference in communities across the state. From experience and scientific evaluations, we know that there are approaches that work to prevent violence. These include the following:

- *After-School Programs:* Give young people somewhere to go, something productive to do, and someone who believes in them. Programs that are based in the school or the community help protect youth during the critical after-school hours (3 – 7 p.m.) when most youth crime occurs.
 - In Sacramento, La Familia provides recreation, tutoring, mentoring and job placement assistance to scores of teens each year. As one young participant said, "This program gave me a positive place to be and a way to make good choices about my time."
- *Peer Mentoring and Conflict Resolution:* Train middle school and high school youth as mediators to help their peers resolve disputes without resorting to violence. Newsweek Magazine has called this generation of youth the most peer-influenced group. Whether as mediators or disputants, young people develop valuable communication and problem-solving skills and learn to understand themselves and each other through these types of programs.
 - In West Oakland, peer mediators in school-based conflict resolution programs have helped defuse rising racial tensions among students and reduce the number of fights at school by finding non-violent ways to settle disputes.
- *School-based Violence Prevention Education:* Promote effective violence prevention curriculum at all grade levels, K-12, because violence is a learned behavior, and to unlearn it, schools need to teach young people lessons on preventing violence in dating relationships as well as other types of violence.
 - The Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women has been instrumental in advocating for a comprehensive curriculum in the Los Angeles Unified School District that helps students understand and prevent all types of violence.
- *Intergenerational Approaches:* Involve caring adults who can be role models for youth and personally help keep youth on the right path.
 - In Los Angeles, Mujeres Unidas, a project of Innercity Struggle, developed a plan that involved supportive adults in helping to reduce truancy rates among students living in the Estrada Courts housing project communities.

- *Job Training and Economic Development:* Poverty is a real issue in many communities struggling with violence, and helping uplift communities economically has made a difference in preventing violence. Some of the most effective violence prevention programs do three things: 1) help young people build the skills and experience to access good jobs; ; 2) obtain resources and investments in the community to make sure good jobs are available; and 3) hire young people.
 - In Santa Cruz, Barrios Unidos has developed several profitable enterprises, including a silkscreening shop, where young people can learn all aspects of running a successful and demanding business. Youth recruit new clients, manage the contracts, design and make the T-shirts and posters, and train other youth.
- *Civic Participation:* Get youth and adults involved in creating positive changes in their communities. The best programs do that by assessing community needs, organizing residents to support responsible prevention policies, and giving families the information they need to then educate their government representatives.
 - In Escondido, youth from the Escondido Youth Encounter project convinced the local mayor to establish a youth commission that engages youth from the community and encourages their participation in establishing goals and policies that will directly affect the lives of all youth in Escondido.
- *Mapping Community Potential:* Engage youth in identifying potential areas where, with public investment and community support, physical resources and other assets in low-income neighborhoods could be developed.
 - In Riverside, students with People Reaching Out created a map identifying potential areas for civic investment. They secured the mayor's commitment to improve the Cesar Chavez Community Center so that Eastside Youth will have a safe place to spend time.
- *Alternative Sentencing and Restorative Justice:* Intervene early with young offenders and provide the guidance, counseling, drug treatment and community involvement they need to avoid more serious crimes later.
 - In Pomona, youth and adults organized to create the Pomona Drug Court which gives young people who are convicted of minor drug offenses an alternative to incarceration: the chance to be sentenced to intense alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs.

4. The strengths and weaknesses of California's approach to prevention

Current governmental violence prevention efforts in California focus primarily on incarceration as a method of deterrence. At more than twice the national average, California's youth incarceration rate is one of the highest in the nation. As practiced in California, incarcerating youth requires a large and costly bureaucracy, its centerpiece being the California Youth Authority (CYA). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the face of decreasing resources and increasing prison populations, rehabilitation programs were cut back in favor of housing more individuals and hiring guards to maintain order in this chronically overcrowded environment. In addition, primary and secondary prevention programs designed to keep youth out of the juvenile incarceration system were cut. The recent passage of Proposition 21 is likely to exacerbate this trend.

There is no inherent conflict between incarceration and prevention. The two are points along a continuum of programs to address societal ills. However, the state of California has lost its balance and is overweight in incarceration while anemic in prevention. Shifting resources to more comprehensive violence prevention programs requires that we move ourselves and our society beyond special interests, beyond the politically expedient, and beyond the punishment mentality. The issue we must bring to the forefront of the debate is not what we should do with individuals that have committed violent acts, but what we as a society are willing to do to decrease and prevent violence before it occurs.

Over the past two years there has been a new emphasis placed on funding violence prevention programs by the State Legislature. In fact, funding for violence prevention programs has risen for the second year in a row, and California is currently providing more funding to after school programs than any other state in the Nation. The State has also recently passed a number of laws to reduce access to handguns. This is especially significant for preventing violence against youth, as handguns remain the leading cause of death for young people in California.

The number of violence prevention measures that have passed in both the California Senate and the Assembly in recent years point to significant legislative will and public support to make California a national leader in preventing violence against youth. However, recent reports like the one issued by the Legislative Analyst Office have highlighted several problems with the State's current approach to prevention: limited accountability for expenditures and results, lack of evaluation, and lack of coordination among departments. In addition, the amount of funding dedicated to violence prevention remains relatively low compared to the need. Two examples of effective prevention programs the State should consider bringing to scale are the After School Program of the Department of Education and the Repeat Offender Prevention Program "the 8% Solution" pioneered by Orange County's Probation Department.

5. The adequacy, generally, of program evaluation

After investing \$6 million in evaluating the first five years of the Violence Prevention Initiative, the Foundation has learned several key lessons that inform our next evaluation of the final five years of the Initiative:

- ◆ *Ask fewer evaluation questions:* Answering too many questions undermined the Foundation's evaluation from the start.
- ◆ *Diversify our evaluation approaches:* The impact of complex grantmaking initiatives cannot be assessed by investing only in a traditional, rigorously "scientific" evaluation, especially when we are measuring changes at the community level.
- ◆ *De-emphasize academic attribution:* Despite initial hopes or expectations, there is no irrefutable empirical proof of causal connections linking changes in violence rates to the Foundation's violence prevention grants.
- ◆ *Tell the stories behind the statistics:* The Foundation did not invest as much in an qualitative analysis of the Initiative (i.e., case studies, individual profiles), and that has meant missing compelling human stories behind the numbers.

- ◆ *Collect lessons learned:* Sharing what we have learned (not just what has worked) will be an important contribution to the fields of philanthropy, public health, and violence prevention.
- ◆ *Link evaluation with broader dissemination:* What to evaluate must be tied to an overall strategy about why, how, and to whom we communicate evaluation findings.

After ten years of funding the Violence Prevention Initiative, the Foundation will have spent \$7.3 million on evaluation. What we want to know after all the money has been spent can be simply stated: What happened because of the Initiative and how did the Initiative make a difference in preventing violence against youth? That means looking at both empirical evidence and anecdotal accounts, original grant objectives and actual grantee activities, unanticipated outcomes and evolving strategies and relationships, state legislative comparisons and local case studies, scientific evaluation reports and journalistic stories. In short, we've learned that there are variety of ways to gauge the success of prevention, and that has taught us to be open to validating and investing in different evaluation approaches using diverse measures of success.

6. What the State can do to further advance a statewide prevention agenda

Compared with 1994 when this Commission addressed preventing juvenile crime at its peak, the State of California today has less crime, less violence, and less unemployment along with more money, more youth, and more support for prevention in the legislature and among voters. When we think about prevention in this new climate, we're building a safe home for the 5 million youth that will live in California during this decade. You can build a roof on your house when it's raining or when the sun's shining. Right now, the sun's shining in this State, and we have the time and resources necessary to take action in order to keep our youth safe and healthy. The only question that remains is whether we have the political will to do so.

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